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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Dominican Leadership Conference, Elizabeth Seton Federation, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, School Sisters of Notre Dame and Sisters of Mercy, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and Armenian International Women's Association, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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We, NGOs working at a grassroots level for gender equality and engaged in systemic and policy advocacy to promote the dignity and empowerment of all women, affirm the message in The Beijing Declaration, adopted by the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995 that "all governments [should] encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality" (paragraph 25).

Sadly, we must recognize that eight years after the Beijing Platform for Action men continue to hold dominant positions in institutional and social structures that perpetuate massive discrimination against women and girls and that systematically violate their human rights. This discrimination takes a variety of forms, from denial of education to girls and women and the exclusion of women from political participation to the subjection of women and girls to rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other practices of male violence against women.

One of the most severe, devastating, and escalating practices of gender-based violence is the commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, including prostitution, sex trafficking, the Internet bride industry, pornography, and sex tourism. While the international community has addressed the role that organized crime, government corruption, and economic policies have played in the global sex industry, until recently there has been little focus on the crucial role of the demand for prostitution by men and boys in fueling this human rights catastrophe.

Demand by men and boys for prostitution in the wealthy, so-called "receiving countries" and the billions of dollars it generates constitute the primary impetus for the trafficking of women and girls from poor, so-called "sending countries." Demand for prostitution by men in military service has fostered sex industry complexes outside military bases that exploit local women and girls and reward criminal enterprises that traffic in foreign-born women. The demand of men in wealthy countries for sexual and domestic servants has created the Internet bride and sex tourism industries and propelled growing numbers of women and girls from poor countries into situations of violence and degradation. The demand for prostitution by United Nations peacekeeping troops and humanitarian aid workers has led to the sexual exploitation of women and girls in dire situations of armed conflict and humanitarian crisis. The feminization of poverty has meant that even in impoverished communities women and girls are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation by local men and boys.

Until those men and boys who perpetrate sexual exploitation as buyers of prostitution are held accountable and non-offending men and boys hold accountable their peers who engage in sexual exploitation, the sex industry will continue to flourish and women and girls, individually and as a group, will continue to suffer irreparable harm. To date, the vast majority of activists and individuals working to stop the sexual exploitation of women and girls are female — a reality that must change if sexual exploitation is to be eradicated.

We are heartened by the fact that some men and boys have taken important leadership roles to stop the sexual exploitation of women and girls. In declaring that "sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate universally recognized international legal norms and standards" and by issuing "special measures" to prohibit sexual exploitation and sexual abuse by United Nations staff, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has set an example of male leadership in this arena. In addition, there are men and boys in each world region who deserve recognition for their important contributions to this movement, among them Luis Enrique Costa Ramirez, Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Venezuela, who has pioneered a peer education program to raise the consciousness of youth in Caracas

about the harm of human trafficking; the research of Swedish social work professor Sven Axel-Mansson into the demand of Swedish men for prostitution; the advocacy of Prerana Co-Director Pravin Patkar on behalf of prostituted women in Mumbai; and the activism of Equality Now's Ken Franzblau against sex tourism by American men in the Philippines. We applaud their efforts and hope that these individual men will serve as role models for other men and boys.

There are many programmatic and institutional ways of promoting gender equality and curtailing the demand for prostitution. We appeal to each government to evaluate its own national plan of action to ensure that it includes practical and on-the-ground activities that ensure the equality of men and women and boys and girls. We urge policy and action in the following areas:

- Educational curricula in the lower grades that raise awareness about the harm of gender stereotypes and sexual objectification of women and girls and that promote gender inequality in relationships;
- Educational programs that expose the harm of all forms of pornography and prostitution;
- Training of all institutional players at all levels, including police, prosecutors, judges, and military personnel, to recognize prostituted girls and women as crime victims, not as immoral or criminal;
- Strong and effective prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women, including buyers and sellers of women and girls in prostitution and related practices of sexual exploitation;
- Funding for and dissemination of positive and creative public service messages against male violence against women, with the inclusion of popular male figures as spokespersons;
- Clear acknowledgement that the legalization or legitimization of prostitution or any reliance on prostitution as a source of national revenue fosters demand for prostitution and increases human trafficking;
- Ratification and implementation of the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (the "1949 Convention"); the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW"); the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

The demand for prostitution is a link in the global sex industry chain and can be broken. The Swedish government has reduced prostitution and trafficking by criminalizing prostitution buyers and promoting public education campaigns that hold ordinary Swedish men accountable for purchasing sex. In doing so, Sweden has set an important example for government action worldwide. The Trafficking Protocol to the Transnational Convention Against Organized Crime, which has recently come into force, sets a critically needed international standard by requiring states parties to "adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures... to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking." Sexual exploitation is not inevitable. If men and women acting in equal partnerships join forces to stop the global sex trade in women

and girls, we can achieve a world without sexual exploitation — a world in which no man or boy feels entitled to objectify or purchase the body and human dignity of any woman or girl.